

STATEMENT OF APPLICANT
Winchester Homes, Inc.
“Chapman Row” townhome community
For 1902 Chapman Avenue
STP2015-00251/STP2017-00321
December 15, 2017

SITE PLAN Amendment REQUEST:

The Applicant, Winchester Homes, Inc., the owner of the Chapman Row townhome project, requests approval of an amendment to Site Plan STP2017-00321 to permit certain changes to the site improvements in its townhome project, including the addition of a sound wall parallel to the WMATA/CSX tracks, a modification of the configuration of the decked Esplanade area at the east end of the project, and certain landscaping changes in the Bosque plaza and the amenity and stormwater management areas adjacent to the Esplanade. No changes are proposed in the number of townhome units which remains at 61 townhomes and no changes are proposed in the general site layout or vehicular circulation system for the project.

The purpose of the addition of a sound wall is to provide some noise reduction generated by the WMATA and CSX trains to the homeowners of the closest townhomes and the users of the perimeter Esplanade walking path and the central Bosque plaza. The Planning Commission previously approved a deviation from the City’s Environmental Guidelines for the impact of the intermittent noise from the WMATA/CSX trains on the outdoor spaces in the project. The Property approval has since been amended to for-sale townhomes whose owners will have long-term interests in the use of the outdoor amenity spaces in their community. The sound wall now proposed is of a smaller scale compatible with the townhome community. While it is not designed to provide complete sound buffering of the train noise such that the previously approved deviation is no longer required, it will provide a degree of perceptible relief to the homeowners and users of the community open spaces.

PROPERTY:

The Property is approximately 2.41 gross acres (SF) known as Lot 16, Block 5, Halpine Subdivision per Plat 25184. The Property has approximately 217 feet of frontage along Chapman Avenue and is approximately 444 feet deep.

The Property is part of the former Syms retail site bounded by the new private drive “Thompson Crescent” and the JLB apartment project under construction on adjacent Lot 15 (north), the CSX/WMATA railroad right-of-way (east), Montgomery County fee simple land sloping up to Twinbrook Parkway (south), and Chapman Avenue (west). Existing ground level elevation is highest along Chapman Avenue with a gentle slope downward 8 to 12 feet to the east property line at the railroad tracks. The Property is currently being re-graded to increase the elevation of the townhome site along the eastern and south-eastern sides of the site. Along the eastern boundary, four-story townhomes will sit atop a retaining wall which is setback from the property line and

elevated above the WMATA/CSX tracks to allow a landscaped tree buffer and decked Esplanade at the townhome elevation, and below, a swm facility and additional landscaped tree buffer at the lower elevation of the Metro and CSX tracks.

The Property is zoned MXTD – Mixed Use Transit District and is bounded by: 1) office buildings and service commercial buildings in the MXTD zone to the west across Chapman Avenue, 2) a mixed use multifamily apartment and first floor retail building at 1900 Chapman Avenue which is Phase 1 of the same development as the Property across the private drive “Thompson Crescent”; 3) retail and service commercial buildings in the MXCD zone to the south across Twinbrook Parkway, and 4) directly confronting the Property to the east across the WMATA/CSX railroad right- of- way are several industrial and office buildings and land in the Montgomery County CR-2 zone (Commercial-Residential 2 FAR). The closest single family detached house in a residential zone is approximately ¼ mile away beyond, on the far side of the WMATA station, the CSX tracks and JBG’s Twinbrook Station project at the corner of Halpine Road and Lewis Avenue. The single family homes are not in sight or sound of the Property due to intervening development.

The Property is located approximately 450 feet south of the west entrance to the Twinbrook Metro Station.

RELATED ACTIONS:

Pre-Application Meeting for an amendment to STP2017-00321 to add a sound wall near the WMATA/CSX Tracks and certain site modifications. Community meeting held December 11, 2017. One community member attended from Cambridge Walk Townhouse community.

Site Plan Amendment STP2017-00321, minor amendment approved by Chief of Zoning.

Site Plan Amendment STP2015-00251, approved for 61 townhomes.

Site Plan STP2012-00112, for a mixed use development with 658 multi-family dwelling units in two buildings, 5152 gsf of commercial space, and structured parking, per approval by the Planning Commission by letter dated August 20, 2012.

Time Extension - six months approved by the Planning Commission by letter dated May 1, 2014.

Time Extension – six months approved by the Planning Commission by letter dated August 15, 2014

Record Plat PLT2016-00546, a record plat creating two record lots, Lots 15 and 16, conforming to ownership Lots 14A and 14B, approved by Planning Commission.

Ownership Plat PLT2013-00528, an ownership plat creating two ownership lots 14A and 14B, per approval by the Planning Commission by letter dated June 21, 2013.

Final Record Plat PLT2011-00511, a corrective plat for one lot recorded May 4, 2011 as Plat No. 24213, correcting Plat No. 20377, per approval by the Planning Commission on April 27, 2011.

Use Permit USE96-00566, a commercial development containing an approximately 70,000 gsf retail building, approved by the Planning Commission on September 18, 1996. The Use Permit was implemented and the retail use continues to present.

Final Record Plat PLT96-00065, creating one lot, approved by the Planning Commission on October 23, 1996. Plat 20377 recorded March 27, 1997.

Use Permit U-436-89, a mixed use development containing 320,800 square feet of office space, 335 multi-family apartments, and 44,200 square feet of retail was approved by the Planning Commission on December 13, 1989. The use permit approval expired.

SCP97-00003, FTPO No. 95-7 with associated Storm Water Management Easement Storm Water Management Inspection and Maintenance Agreement dated March 21, 1997 and recorded in Liber 14769 at folio 059 pertaining to Parts One, Two and Three easement areas, and Tree Conservation Easement and Declaration of Covenants dated March 3, 1997 and recorded in Liber 14769 at folio 0065.

FTP2011-00025. NRI FSD for existing conditions in anticipation of this Site Plan Application for 1900 Chapman Avenue redevelopment approved.

APPLICATION:

Amendment Description:

The Chapman Row townhome project includes 61 for-sale townhomes, a large open plaza gathering space known as the “Bosque”, and a perimeter pedestrian path with landscaped open spaces around the community. The perimeter path includes a decked area known as the “Esplanade” along the east end of the property adjacent to the WMATA/CSX tracks. The project was approved for a deviation from the City Environmental Guidelines with respect to noise in the outdoor space at the time of the original site plan approval due to the short, intermittent nature of the noise from passing trains. With the approval of the deviation from the Environmental Guidelines, no sound wall along the WMATA/CSX tracks was required.

Winchester Homes Inc (WHI) purchased the Property and is now the current owner/developer of the townhome project. WHI wishes to add a sound wall along the rear property line to enhance the use of the open spaces by residents and visitors to the community. The sound wall as envisioned would sit at the lower elevation of the existing retaining wall along the tracks, but set back from the tracks, and rise 20 feet (typ.). At the higher elevation of the decked Esplanade open space at the rear of the development, the sound wall would only be 10-12 feet higher than the decking and walking path. If the

sound wall as proposed is approved, a variance for the additional height over eight (8) feet would be sought from the Board of Appeals prior to permit and construction.

WHI also proposes to modify the Esplanade decked configuration to expand users' views down into the lower level stormwater management area between the Esplanade and the wall. This will provide greater solar access to the lower level stormwater management area. The applicant proposes the lower level stormwater management area to be planted with native plantings that would both add color and interest as well as attract nature.

The wall would be natural grey colored concrete with an artistic and textural design pattern facing the development to add interest to the wall as a backdrop. Trees, evergreens, and other plantings will soften the wall for users of the adjacent Esplanade and perimeter path. The sound wall surface facing the WMATA/CSX tracks would be a natural grey concrete with a heavily pebbled textured surface to discourage graffiti.

While the proposed sound wall will not eliminate all of the intermittent noise from passing trains, it will create quieter zones in the outdoor gathering spaces along the perimeter path, the Esplanade decking, and in the Bosque. This will enhance the attractiveness and usability of these spaces for both residents and visitors who spend time outdoors.

An extension of the sound wall partially onto adjacent Lot 15 just behind Lot 15's publicly accessible art installation may be proposed with the owner of Lot 15's consent.

Amendment to Open Area and Amenities:

The approved Townhome community includes the *Bosque*, a large tree-filled landscaped plaza with casual seating to permit flexible use of the space by residents and visitors. The flexible design of the Bosque will allow it to support a variety of programmed activities and passive recreation.

This amendment includes minor modifications to the Bosque plan to increase the amount of lawn area in the south-east corner of the Bosque to provide a focal point for installation of Lot 16's publicly accessible art there. Also proposed is the addition of upgraded brick facing and bluestone caps on the raised planters in the Bosque.

The *Esplanade*, a decked area along the east side of the Townhome community, provides a community gathering space with a walking path and outdoor seating area. As described above, the configuration of the Esplanade is proposed to be modified to provide a greater viewshed into an enhanced lower level planting area.

Proposed modification to the landscape trees and shrubs adjacent to the proposed sound wall will soften the views of the sound wall and enhance the views from the Esplanade and the adjacent townhomes.

Sound Levels Outdoors:

The applicant is not seeking a change to the deviation from the City's Environmental Guidelines previously approved. The proposed addition of the sound wall is however expected to reduce the noise levels of the impact of individual railroad events from the WMATA and CSX trains on the Esplanade of up to 14 dB and to have a lesser, but still perceptible reduction within the Bosque.

The applicant requested its sound consultant, HUSH Acoustics LLC to evaluate the impacts of the installation of the sound wall on the industrial and office properties on the other side of the WMATA/CSX tracks. The sound consultant advised that the resulting predictions are that the sound wall would only increase sound levels 1.8 dB at the closest point of the industrial building across the tracks and would not increase sound levels at the property line of the Davis Construction office building parking lot just beyond. According to the sound consultant, a change of 3 dB would be just barely perceptible, therefore a change of 1.8 dB would likely be imperceptible. While the change in sound level may be measurable by a sound meter, noise at the confronting industrial auto repair building across the tracks will not be perceptibly louder due to reflections off the sound wall on the Chapman Row Property than the noise directly affecting that building generated from intermittent train passage immediately adjacent to that building.

Stormwater Management:

No material changes to the stormwater management area for the Property is proposed by this amendment. The modification to the Esplanade decking will increase solar access to the lower level and support the change in plantings in the stormwater management area. Access to the lower level stormwater management area is provided as shown on the landscape plan.

Transportation.

The proposed amendments are to site improvements and have no effect on internal circulation or trip generation.

Publicly Accessible Art in Private Development:

WHI proposes to install physical art in the modified lawn area of the Bosque to satisfy the Chapter 4 of the City Code (Publicly Accessible Art in Private Development) ordinance requirements for Lot 16.